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**Analysis of the Impact of the Merdeka Curriculum Policy
on Stakeholders at Primary School**

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EANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM POLICY ON STAKEHOLDERS AT PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools is a policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia for implementation for the 2022–2023 school year. This policy analysis aimed to thoroughly criticize the policy aspects of the 2022 Merdeka primary school curriculum for obtaining a prescription for the future. The method of policy analysis in the form of narrative discussion was used to obtain adequate prescriptive results. The results obtained from this policy analysis showed that changes in the Merdeka curriculum in 2022 for primary schools would be incremental. Changing the curriculum followed the innovation process so that innovation attributes were met. The 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools was to restore the regressed learning quality and prepare for the golden generation of 2045. The Character Education Strengthening Program and the Pancasila Student Profile Program demonstrate that ethics education is critical to the golden generation's success.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum; Primary School; Policy Analysis.*



A. Introduction

The curriculum is not static but dynamic; it refers to views from modernism and postmodernism, new understandings about cognitive theory and anatomy, brain physiology, and systems theory. The combination of thoughts about the world and the philosophy of education also impacts curriculum development. There are various definitions of curriculum change, one of which suggests that curriculum change is a process (technical, humanistic, and artistic) that allows schools and school residents to realize educational goals; ideally, everyone affected (stakeholders) by the curriculum is involved in curriculum change (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

Nevenkosky states that "implementation" is a word that can be interpreted as the application or implementation of a plan to realize the goals formulated (Nevenkosky et al., 2019). Ornstein insists that successful curriculum implementation results from careful planning, which focuses on three factors: people, programs, and processes. To carry out curriculum changes, educators must make people change some habits and, perhaps, their views (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

If the curriculum is to meet the needs of students and society today in changing the world, it must be implemented as soon as possible after it is developed (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Delays in implementing the new curriculum will result in losing momentum to achieve the desired changes. This can happen because implementing the curriculum elaborates the plan into actions or instructions the teacher gives (Gordon et al., 2019). In other words, the speed of teachers' mastery of the new curriculum, or the so-called mindset change, is essential. The speed at which curriculum development institutions deliver new curricula to teachers largely determines the successful implementation of the curriculum.

Successful curriculum changes result from careful planning, which focuses on three factors: people, programs, and processes. Educators must make people change some habits and their views to implement curriculum changes. Many school districts fail to implement their programs because they ignore the people factor and spend time and money simply modifying the



program or process. However, the focus on the new program provides people with new ways to meet the goals of the school program. Organizational processes are also critical. The reorganization of departments can move people in the direction necessary for successful implementation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

The results showed that five guidelines must be followed for curriculum changes to be successfully implemented: (1) Innovations designed to improve student achievement must be technically sound. (2) Successful innovation requires a change in the structure of traditional schools. (3) Innovation must be manageable and feasible for the average teacher. (4) The implementation of successful change efforts must be organic rather than bureaucratic. (5) Avoid the syndrome of "do something, anything". a curriculum plan is necessary to focus effort, time, and money on healthy and rational content and activities (Heikkilä, 2020)(Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). This also applies to changes to the curriculum in 2022 for primary schools, which the Ministry of Education and Culture is intensively socializing at this time.

The changes in the 2022 curriculum are different from the 2006 and 2013 curriculum changes, the COVID-19 pandemic, and two development agendas, namely (1) increasing the quality and competitiveness of human resources and (2) triggering sustainable educational actions. This is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which describes it in the National Strategy Plan for Education through the Minister of Education and Culture Number 22 of 2020. There are four anticipations of changes that occur as global trends, namely: (1) taking into global account trends related to rapid technological advances; (2) socio cultural shifts; (3) environmental changes; and (4) differences in the future world of work (Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020).

The Merdeka curriculum will be implemented in the 2022–2023 school year after undergoing trials in 1,114 primary school education units spread throughout Indonesia (Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). The trial is a formative evaluation whose quantitative and qualitative data are used to improve, especially the attributes of innovation, namely its compatibility,



observability, trialability, complexity, and relative advantages. The Merdeka curriculum has not been implemented nationally, so the policy analysis is a prescriptive strategy.

The implementation of the independent curriculum cannot be separated from various evaluation results of the implementation of the 2013 curriculum. Not for comparison, but this evaluation is used for improvement. Evaluation of the implementation of the 2013 curriculum includes inadequate infrastructure; learning activities have not led to literacy and numeracy, teachers still having difficulties with the assessment system, learning materials are too dense, and student learning styles not been optimally accommodated (Astuti et al., 2018; Rizkia et al., 2021; Simponi & Primary, 2020). The results of this evaluation serve as one of the references to the implementation of the curriculum, which was previously used as the basis for improvement in the independent curriculum.

The curriculum continues to develop to the extent that there is a need according to current conditions (Solichati & Musfiqon, 2020). There is various urgency for discussing this topic, namely that the independent curriculum has begun to be used in various pilot schools. Seeing the movement, the independent curriculum will become national, so principals and teachers must be prepared. This research study is essential to provide a nuanced and detailed picture of the role of an independent curriculum.

The description of previous research is in the scope of introducing an independent curriculum (Nur'inayah, 2021; Ramadina, 2021). This research examines in depth how the independent curriculum has an impact on stakeholders in providing decisions and policies for the realm of elementary schools. Thus, it can provide an overview of steps and policies that practitioners can carry out in school.

B. Method

The qualitative research design of "narrative discussion" is a written part of a qualitative study in which the authors summarize, in detail, the findings of the data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, detailed



results were obtained from the policy analysis carried out on the Merdeka curriculum. The research aims of this analysis include (1) the changes in the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools; (2) the attributes of innovation that have been met in the design of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools, and (3) the impact of 2022 Merdeka curriculum on stakeholders.

Policy analysis uses many different research methods and is drawn from different disciplines to obtain the information necessary to assess a problem and think clearly about alternative ways to solve it. The same information also forms the basis of public debate and deliberation about what actions should be taken (Kraft & Furlong, 2021) -the creation, critical assessment, and communication of knowledge relevant to policy.

This study uses a literature review to review in-depth studies of the Merdeka curriculum published in journals. In this study, 20 articles were used, which were excavated from September 2022 to January 2023. The variables that were used as the focus of searching for articles in this study were the Merdeka curriculum, curriculum changes, and the impact of the Merdeka curriculum. The articles used are sourced from Google Scholar and ERIC, which have high-impact factors. We classified the selected articles into three main topics in this study according to the described above.

C. Result and Discussion

The 2022 curriculum policy analysis for primary schools will be focused on three main topics: (1) changes that exist in the 2022 curriculum for primary schools; (2) the fullness of the attributes of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum innovation for primary schools; and (3) the impact of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools on stakeholders. The 2022 curriculum policy analysis for primary schools is prescriptive because only the 2022-2023 school year is widely implemented. However, this policy analysis is complemented by research on the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools conducted during the trial period in driving primary schools.



1. Result

a. Changes in the Merdeka 2022 Curriculum for primary schools.

In topic 1, there are exciting findings related to various changes in the independent curriculum. Changes occurred in the structure and implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. In more detail, it includes a change in focus on essential material so that students have more time to learn basic competencies, such as literacy and numeracy. Teachers are more flexible in differentiating learning according to students' abilities. Project-based learning system to improve students' soft skills and character according to the Pancasila student profile (Manggalastawa, 2023; Net, 2022; Zethembe Mseleku, 2020).

The 2022 primary school curriculum has yet to be officially socialized, both soft-file and hard-file. Many academic studies will be sourced from various sources successfully found through surfing in cyberspace. The picture that has been successfully extracted from these sources will be studied academically in relation to previous curriculum changes and life changes that are predicted to occur in the future.

The strategic plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2020-2024 focuses on the Merdeka Belajar policy as a guide for human resource development in organizing and maximizing demographic bonuses, which are the key to achieving a developed nation with social justice, as aspired by the Founders of the Nation (Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). The Merdeka Belajar program was then further operationalized through the Mobilizing School Program, which finally launched the curriculum in 2022, referred to as the "merdeka curriculum".

The Merdeka curriculum continues the direction of previous curriculum development. (1) Holistic orientation: The curriculum is designed to develop students holistically, including academic and non-academic skills and cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual competencies. (2) Competency-based, not content-based: The curriculum is designed based on the competencies you want to develop, not on specific content or material. (3) Contextualization and personalization: The curriculum is designed according to the context

(culture, school mission, local environment) and the needs of students (Pratikno et al., 2023).

The Merdeka curriculum has several principal characteristics that support learning recovery: (1) Project-based learning for developing soft skills and character (faith, taqwa, and noble character; mutual aid; global diversity; independence; critical reasoning; creativity). (2) Focus on essential materials so that there is sufficient time for deep learning for essential competencies such as literacy and numeracy. (3) Flexibility for teachers to carry out learning by students' abilities (teach at the right level) and to the local context and content (Maipita et al., 2021; Sultan et al., 2022).

Briefly, it can be concluded that the strengthening of fundamental competencies and holistic understanding is intended: (1) to understand the surrounding environment, science, and social studies subjects are combined as subjects of Natural and Social Sciences (NSS); (2) integration of computational thinking in subjects such as Indonesian, Mathematics, and NSS; and (3) English as an elective subject. Project-based learning to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students is carried out at least twice in one school year.

This prototype curriculum repeats the division of competencies at the beginning of the curriculum in 2013 SD, namely, a division adjusted to the abilities and needs that are characteristic of primary school students as follows: (1) Phase A for classes I & II, (2) Phase B for class III & IV, and (3) Phase C for class V & VI. This demonstrates a connection between the prototype curriculum's conception and the curriculum in 2013 primary schools.

The implementation of their curriculum in 2022 is tentative and will be implemented for evaluation in 2024. 2006, subject-based, and thematic-based 2013 curricula can organize the learning content (Andriati et al., 2017; Cahyaningtyas et al., 2020). The 2022 SD curriculum also provides opportunities for academic units to choose the matics or subjects or a combination of the two.

Taking into account the study of the 2022 curriculum, there is nothing that burdens primary school stakeholders. Instead of paying attention to the



desired direction, namely increasing digital capabilities and realizing the profile of Pancasila students, predictions can be drawn that for the next 23 years, namely 2045, there will be a "golden generation" who can face the intimacy of intelligence in the existence of AI and AGI that has super intelligent behavior (Nur'Inayah, 2021). As depicted, the Pancasila student profile will not be replaced with AGI because the formation of the Pancasila profile is both a superhuman figure and an adaptive super intelligence.

b. Attributes of Merdeka Curriculum Innovation 2022 for Primary Schools

The second result has essential findings on the Merdeka curriculum attribute. The next goal of the independent curriculum is to develop students' potential. This curriculum is made simple and flexible so that learning will be more in-depth. In addition, the Merdeka curriculum also focuses on essential material and the development of student competencies in its phases (Khoiri, 2021; Panoyo et al., 2019; Sibagariang et al., 2021). With the existence of a Merdeka curriculum, it is expected to develop students' competence. This is a distinct advantage, where this curriculum places more emphasis on the freedom of students. This curriculum also makes it easier for teachers to provide learning to students.

Five innovation attributes are entirely met in the 2022 Malaysian curriculum changes for primary schools. Compatibility is met by the policy that this Merdeka curriculum is optional; the school is still allowed to choose the curriculum to be implemented. The 2022 Merdeka curriculum also gives stakeholders the freedom to make adjustments to the content of the Merdeka curriculum.

The relative advantage provided by the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools is flexibility for the school to formulate learning outcomes tailored to the context of the environment and students. With this convenience, stakeholders can cooperate more with each other to realize graduate competency standards (SKL). This relative advantage includes using a Merdeka curriculum to create co-curricular activity profiles for Pancasila students (Azlina et al., 2021; Nurohmah & Dewi, 2021).



The 2022 Merdeka curriculum trial for primary schools in 1,114 schools provides an attribute of observability, as it provides an opportunity for schools not included in the driving schools to observe. The observability of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools provides an opportunity for other schools to identify and inventory their implementation needs. When conducting observations, trials can be conducted to conduct learning in the observed class. This activity marks the trialability attribute in the 2022 Merdeka curriculum innovation for primary schools (Muhyi et al., 2022).

The complexity of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum innovation for primary schools is minimal because many simplifications are made in the 2022 Merdeka curriculum. Simplification of learning content by choosing only essential content, learning tools as an example, and the ease with which teachers can adjust student-centered learning. This indicates that everything is simple in primary schools' 2022 Merdeka curriculum innovation.

c. Impact of Merdeka Curriculum 2022 Primary Schools on Stakeholders

The third study finding rests on the impact of the independent curriculum on current education policy analysis. The curriculum brings enormous changes; thus, policymakers and practitioners must prepare themselves. The 2022 Merdeka curriculum policy for primary schools impacts all stakeholders, namely principals, teachers, students, school committees, parents, and the community around the school (Kosasih et al., 2022; Mustagfiroh, 2020; Sultan et al., 2022). The perceived impact on the principal is to improve coordination with teachers and school committees to implement the Merdeka curriculum.

Routine monitoring and evaluation through various means must be carried out to ensure the implementation of student needs-based learning. The effect of the 2022 independent curriculum innovation on school principals includes the intensification of collaboration between the three education centers (family, school, and community); the planning, implementation, and assessment of intra curricular activities based on



student differentiation; and the planning, implementation, and assessment of project activities to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (Utami et al., 2022.; Wulansari et al., 2022).

Teachers are most affected by the implementation of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum in primary schools, considering teachers as designers, implementers, and assessors of independent learning oriented toward meeting the learning needs of students (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). As a designer, the teacher must be able to translate the contents of the Merdeka curriculum structure that his students need. As implementers, teachers can collaborate with other teachers or even become peer teacher leaders. This is done so that the implementation of independent learning is created through an innovative learning environment that meets the needs of student differentiation. As an appraiser, the teacher must be aware that the assessment function determines the student's learning outcomes and helps identify learning effectiveness.

Thus, the influence of Merdeka curriculum innovation on teachers includes design, implementation, and assessment: differentiation learning, personal learning, learning with mobile devices, and a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students. Consequently, teachers must improve their technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge to carry out Merdeka curriculum innovations in intra curricular learning and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project.

Primary school students are affected by the 2022 Merdeka Curriculum changes not simultaneously but gradually, starting from grade 1 and grade 4 in stages until 2024/25. Students are affected by the learning actions provided by the teacher according to their respective abilities, so their needs are served. In addition, the co-curricular activities of the Pancasila student profile program must also be followed. Primary-level English is a must-learn for primary school students to strengthen their mastery of the language. In addition, students must improve their literacy in information and communication technology and find the information they need through mobile devices (McKenney & Voogt, 2017).

The school committee, parents, and community around the primary school were affected, especially when students underwent the Pancasila student profile project (Alsarrani et al., 2021; Heikkilä, 2020). This is a consequence of the Pancasila student profile project policy, which must involve the surrounding community. The school committee and parents supervise primary school students when they are outside the school, assisted, of course, by the community around the school. Three education centers must collaborate to optimize the desired outcomes in the Merdeka curriculum innovation, particularly the project of strengthening the profile of Pancasila students.

2. Discussion

This research study is based on 3 main things, namely change, attribute, and impact. The first discussion lies in the change. Various changes were seen in the implementation of the independent curriculum. The Merdeka curriculum, in accordance with the findings of the study, focuses on literacy and numeracy. This topic was not a core focus in the previous curriculum because it was based on a scientific approach. Merdeka also puts forward the process of differentiation between students by teachers. In line with that, according to research from (Muhyi et al., 2022), the independent curriculum's characteristics are literacy and numeracy. Research (Ismaya et al., 2021) added that independence is the fulcrum of using relevant technology. Seeing the results of this study, the authors assume that the impact of Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the direction of learning activities. Hence, it dramatically influences the use of technology for learning activities.

Statement from Mrunalini Talla that "changing the curriculum is a common phenomenon in any educational system". Generally, members involved in the curriculum process are very ambitious in bringing about change, which may be challenging to implement, or they may be outside the target group level. It is essential to remember the target group for whom it was designed. It is also vital to remain on par with the changing times and



the needs, interests, and aspirations of society and learners (Talla, 2012). Discussing the policy of changing the Merdeka curriculum in 2022 for primary schools must start from a standard view of the occurrence of curriculum changes.

The second discussion is related to attributes in the Merdeka curriculum. The research findings state that the focus of the Merdeka curriculum is on how students learn in a differentiated manner, and the focus is on students. In line with that, research (Sopiali, 2020) has students as learning centers, so learning services are based on student needs by considering current needs.

Leadership should be a concern as curriculum change, development, and implementation are carried out (Talla, 2012)(Glatthorn, 2019), in addition to collaboration (Glatthorn, 2019). Leadership does not always come from the principal, but it takes peer-teacher leadership for the success of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum in primary schools. The collaboration will be easier to do and more effective with the leadership of peer teachers (Wan et al., 2020).

The third discussion is related to impact. Previous research suggests that a change in curriculum will bring about significant changes in policy and the direction of educational goals (Ainia, 2020; Kosasih et al., 2022). We agree that this change has resulted in a variety of new policies from both central stakeholders and practitioners. School principals and teachers must need an adaptation and resilience system to dynamics because they are figures who directly meet the subject, namely students. This statement is by research (Kajander et al., 2020.; Toprak, 2020), which suggests that educators play a vital role in changing this curriculum.

The simplification that exists in the 2022 primary school curriculum is a necessity that will become a reality if and only if there are no teachers still thinking about staying in their comfort zone. Simplified does not mean reducing the desired quality for primary school education; it is increasingly elevated because the main thing is the increasing profiling of Pancasila students from an early age. The preparation of teachers to implement the

Merdeka Curriculum 2022 in primary schools was changed from what was already commonly done.

There are two important notes with the leadership pattern of peer teachers: firstly, the success rate of the decimation of the curriculum in 2022 primary schools is high when the mobilizing teachers are empowered at the right time. Second, the culture of serving leaders is far from the thinking of the holders of the leader's office; more still consider the leader's primary duties and functions to be governing. These are two records of disseminating the implementation of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum in primary schools, which flow because the curriculum changes are as natural as other changes.

The golden generation of 2045 is designed to be human beings equipped with the ability to utilize digital technology and noble ethics and morals. Kurzweil (2005) predicts a "technological singularity" in 2045, which is the time when super intelligence designs a generation of increasingly powerful thinking machines. This can happen quickly and may continue until the cognitive abilities of those generations or agents surpass those of humans on Earth (Tariq et al., 2022) (Korotayev, 2018). Thus, strengthening character education (PPK) and the profile of Pancasila students is a worthy provision for the golden generation.

D. Conclusion

The policy analysis of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum for primary schools can lead to the following conclusions: First, the presence of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum in primary schools is expected to improve education for primary school students and help them catch up with other countries. Second, curriculum changes should be addressed as a common phenomenon that can occur when curriculum evaluation calls for them.

Leadership, primarily peer teacher leadership, and the collaboration of all stakeholders will support the success of curriculum change. If a resilient generation is desired, the preparation of the Golden Generation 2045 must begin immediately, and academics with a focus on primary school education



must participate in the development of the 2022 Merdeka curriculum in order to realize what is aspired to be realized.

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